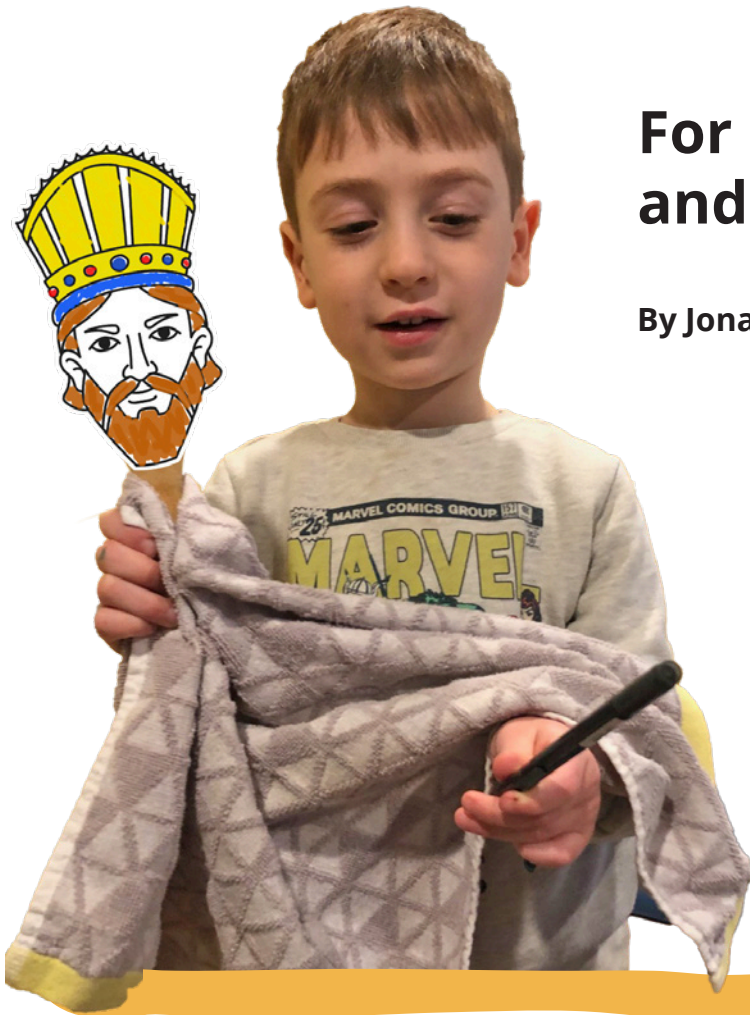


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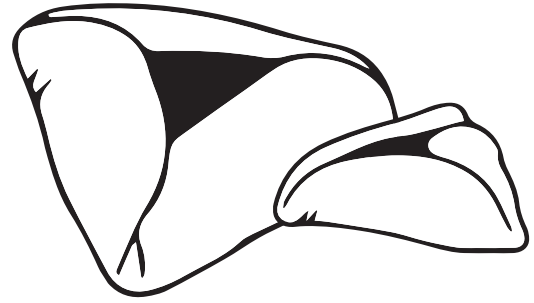
# Purim Discovery Kit

**For Grandparents  
and Their Families**

By Jonathan Shmidt Chapman



Welcome to your Purim Discovery Kit. This interactive guide is designed especially for grandparents and grandchildren (ages 3 to 8) to use together — either in person or at a distance. The kit offers ideas and activities to bring the holiday of Purim to life through dramatic play, imagination, and hands-on discovery. You can do all of the activities in order or choose those that are most appropriate for your family and for the ages of your grandchildren.



The Purim Discovery Kit is divided into three sections, each focused on a different aspect of the holiday:

- 1 A Shpiel in Shushan — Performing the Story of Purim:** Discover the story behind the celebration of Purim and learn about the tradition of theatrically performing the tale.
- 2 Celebrate Purim — Customs and Rituals:** Learn more about the customs of Purim and the ways they illuminate the meaning of the holiday, from making hamantaschen to delivering *mishloach manot* gift baskets.
- 3 Behind the Mask — Bravery to Be You:** Connect the story of Purim to your own life. Explore the theme of being brave and bold in the world, like Queen Esther did when she shared her Jewish identity with the whole kingdom.

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We'd love to hear about your experience using this kit. Send your stories and feedback to [info@jewishgrandparentsnetwork.org](mailto:info@jewishgrandparentsnetwork.org).

Editor: Terry S. Kaye and Ilene Vogelstein  
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## 1

# A Shpiel in Shushan — Performing the Story of Purim

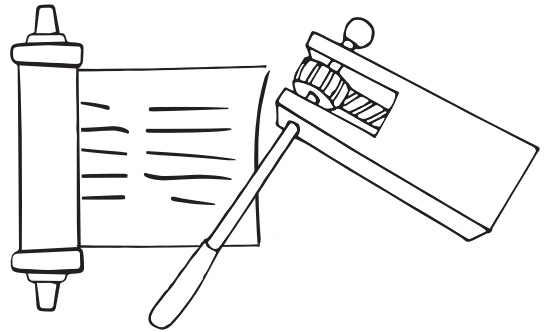
## Background to Purim

**Purim** (literally “lots” in Hebrew) is a joyous holiday that takes place on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the Hebrew month Adar and commemorates the survival of the Jewish people during the Persian Empire (circa 539–330 BCE). The celebration is based on the Book of Esther (*Megillat Esther*), which offers a story about a threat against the Jewish people of Shushan.

Haman, advisor to King Achashverosh, attempts to harm the Jewish population across the kingdom, casting lots to select the date for his evil plot. Ultimately, his plan is foiled by the bravery of Queen Esther; when she reveals her Jewish identity, the king has a change of heart, and the Jewish people of Shushan are saved.

Purim is a joyful and energetic community celebration, filled with opportunities for participants of all ages to get involved in the fun. The reading of the *Megillah*, or scroll of the Book of Esther, is an interactive and raucous event with vocal call-and-response throughout.

The Purim shpiel is a silly performance of the holiday story, typically acted out by members of the community. Purim celebrations include the traditions of wearing costumes and giving gift baskets to friends and family and to those in need.



### Grandparents can prepare for Purim by considering these questions:

- If you could spend a day in someone else’s shoes, who would you be and why?
- In what ways have you shown bravery over the past year?
- How can you find ways to connect to the Purim holiday with your grandchild at home or virtually, outside of community celebrations?

### Help grandchildren get ready for Purim by choosing from these questions:

- Why is it fun to dress up? Who would you like to pretend to be if you could be anyone other than yourself?
- What is different about acting out a story, rather than just reading it? Which stories have you seen performed live?

## The Story of Purim

On Purim, we commemorate the story from the Book of Esther of how Queen Esther saved the Jewish people of Shushan from Haman's evil plot by bravely sharing her identity with her kingdom. The following is an adaptation for young children. You can learn more about the history of the Purim holiday and the origins of the story [here](#).

Read or tell your grandchild the story whether you are together in person or at a distance. Your grandchild may like to draw the story while you tell it or afterward.

**One day, long ago**, King Achashverosh of Shushan threw a party for his entire kingdom. He asked Queen Vashti to dance and entertain the partygoers, but she refused. "I don't like being told what to do, and I will not dance," she proclaimed, and she stormed out of the kingdom. The king was left without a queen to rule by his side. "I have an idea — I'll throw a royal contest to choose the next queen!" he said. A Jewish man named Mordechai told his niece Esther to enter the contest, and the king chose Esther as the winner. "Tell me more about yourself, Esther," the king requested. Esther talked about her hobbies and her favorite places in Shushan. But she left out one very big detail — she decided to hide from the king that she was Jewish.

Later, the king's advisor Haman was walking through the town square, using his power to make people bow down to him. Mordechai refused. "I am Jewish, and I don't bow down to anyone but God," Mordechai bravely said to Haman. "You'll regret this, Mordechai," Haman said. Haman convinced the king that Shushan was too crowded and that the Jewish people were the problem. "They need to go!" Haman hissed. When Mordechai learned of Haman's evil plan, he sent a note to Esther, saying, "You have to save your people." Esther came up with an idea. She threw another big party and invited the whole kingdom. In front of everyone, she revealed her identity. "I am one of the Jewish people — the people you have decided don't belong in Shushan!" The king couldn't believe it, and he definitely didn't want to lose his queen again. "It was his idea," said the king pointing to Haman. "Shushan is a city where all people can feel welcome." Esther saved the day, and the Jewish people of Shushan celebrated.

### Questions to ask about the story:

- Why do you think we sometimes hide things about ourselves?
- In what ways were Vashti and Esther both brave?
- When is a time that you were brave (in a small or big way)?

## Purim Shpiel Script

Many people around the world perform the story of Purim as a play, called a Purim shpiel, as part of the holiday celebration. Use the script below, along with the next few activities, to create your own Purim performance. The story is adapted here into five short two-character scenes. You can use these lines or the full story above to make your own version

### Scene 1: King Achashverosh and Vashti

**KING:** Vashti, dance for all of our guests!

**VASHTI:** I'm tired of you telling me what to do. I don't want to dance. I quit!

### Scene 2: King and Esther

**KING:** I need a queen to help me rule the kingdom. Would you be my queen?

**ESTHER:** Yes, I will! *(To herself:)* But I won't tell him I'm one of the Jewish people.

### Scene 3: Mordechai and Haman

**MORDECHAI:** My niece is the new queen of Shushan!

**HAMAN:** I don't care who you are. You must bow to me.

**MORDECHAI:** I'm a proud Jewish person, and I'll never bow to you!

**HAMAN:** You'll never get away with this. You'll see!

### Scene 4: Haman and King

**HAMAN:** I think you should tell all the Jewish people to leave this city. It's way too crowded anyway, Your Majesty.

**KING:** You are right. Good idea, Haman.

### Scene 5: Esther and King

**ESTHER:** What am I going to do? I have a plan. *(To the King:)* Let's have a party!

**KING:** Esther, this is the best party you've ever thrown.

**ESTHER:** Too bad it is my last one. I'm one of the Jewish people, and you ordered that we must leave!

**KING:** That will never happen. I take it back. Shushan is now and will always be a city for all people.

## Purim Characters Come to Life

Bring the characters of the Purim story to life using homemade puppets and your imagination.


### Materials:

- Purim Puppet Character Template
- Wooden spoons or other long kitchen utensils
- Scissors, tape
- Crayons or markers
- Colorful dish towels or cloth



### Instructions:

1. First, think about the five characters in the story: King Achashverosh, Vashti, Queen Esther, Mordechai, and Haman. What words would you use to describe each one? Write down two or three adjectives for each character.
2. Now, print out a copy of the Purim character puppets on page 8. Color the faces and cut them out.
3. Attach each face to the head of a long kitchen utensil (a wooden spoon, spatula, or anything with a long handle will work).
4. Put one hand underneath the dish towel and wrap it around the handle of the utensil. This becomes the body of your puppet. Make sure your character is facing away from you.
5. Slip your other hand underneath the towel. This will become the pretend hand of the puppet. You might use a pencil or pen as a prop, such as a scepter. Practice using that hand to gesture as each character.
6. Using the puppets, practice becoming each of the five characters. Create different voices and body movements for each. How do the characters move? How do they sound? Use the adjectives you brainstormed for inspiration.

 For grandparents at a distance, use FaceTime or Zoom in creative ways. Each person can put their puppet in the frame of the camera and hide their own face off-camera. You can use the device screen as the stage, with puppets entering and exiting in and out of frame. You can also play with characters getting bigger and smaller based on how close they are to the screen.

## Put on a Purim Shpiel

Use your puppets and your imagination to bring the story of Purim to life in your own Purim shpiel.

### Materials:

- Purim story or Purim shpiel script (pages 4 and 5)
- Purim character puppets
- Pillows and blankets
- A variety of items from around the house (chairs, bedsheets, pillows)

### Instructions:

1. Find an open space to play together. Collect objects from around the house to create the setting of the Shushan kingdom. Ask your grandchild to be the designer, and you can be the helper.
2. Decide who will play each character and if you'll use the puppets or become the characters yourselves.
3. Using the simple Purim shpiel script on page 5, you can act out the story through five two-character scenes. Each of you can take on one of the roles. You can say the lines as your character or have a third person read the lines as the others enter and exit as the characters. Or make up your own play based on the story.
7. Once you have practiced, invite other family members or friends to watch your Purim shpiel.



For grandparents at a distance, use FaceTime or Zoom in creative ways. Use the device screen as the stage. Collaborate to create scenery in both of your locations. Act out the scenes with one character on each of your screens at a time. Once you've practiced, you can record the video of your FaceTime or Zoom Purim shpiel and share it with friends and family.

## Purim Puppet Character Template

Use these character faces to make the puppets on page 6.



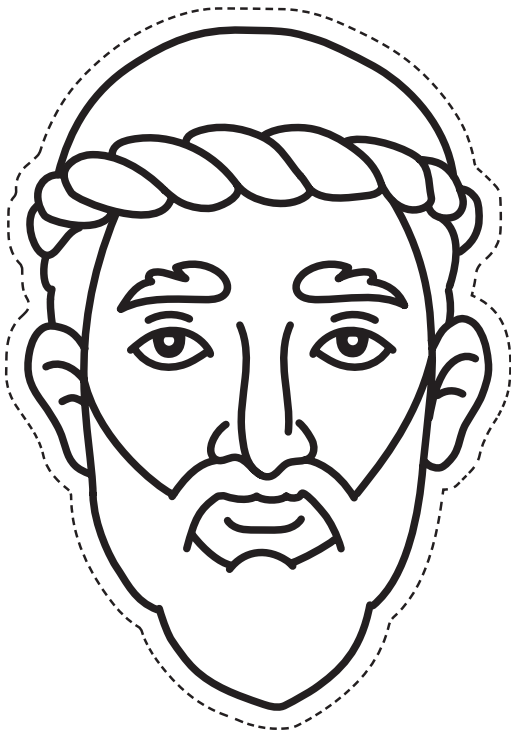
King Achashverosh



Queen Esther



Queen Vashti



Mordechai



Haman



## 2 Celebrate Purim

### Customs and Rituals

We celebrate Purim through a variety of customs and rituals.

- **Reading the *Megillah* and Performing the Purim Story:** The *Megillah* (literally “scroll”) is often used to refer to *Megillat Esther* (the Book of Esther). It is traditionally read aloud on Purim in the evening and the following morning of the holiday. During the reading, we shake or twirl *groggers* (noisemakers) every time the name of the evil Haman is said. Many communities also perform the Purim story, called a Purim shpiel, which often includes humor that pokes fun at modern-day life.
- **Making and Eating Hamantaschen:** We eat three-cornered cookies called hamantaschen (literally “Haman’s pockets” in Yiddish), which some people say refers to the shape of Haman’s hat. In Israel, hamantaschen are called *oznei Haman* (“Haman’s ears”). We can fill the cookies with various fillings, including fruit (raspberry, apricot) or chocolate.
- **Dressing Up in Costume:** Many people dress up in costume on Purim — often as the Purim characters — and attend community carnivals. This commemorates the way that Esther originally hid her identity, and it also mirrors the upside-down, topsy-turvy way that the situation is reversed at the end of the Purim story.
- **Giving Gift Baskets and Charity:** Many people create gift baskets (which include hamantaschen) called *mishloach manot* (“sending portions”) to give to family and friends on Purim. Many also give charity called *matanot la’evyonim* (“gifts to the needy”) so that everyone, including those experiencing food insecurity, can celebrate the holiday with food.



**Here are some activities to help you explore the customs of Purim with your grandchild:**

### **Upside-Down Costume Swap**

Celebrate the silliness of Purim by dressing up and making each other laugh.


#### **Materials:**

- Paper; crayons or markers
- Clothing items and accessories



#### **Instructions:**

1. On paper, draw a silly costume design for the other person. Now, think about how to bring your costume to life using materials you can find around the house. Go on a scavenger hunt to find clothing items that remind you of the designs you drew.
2. Become costume designers by giving the items you found to the other person to wear. The grandchild is in charge of what the grandparent wears, and vice versa.
3. Once everyone is dressed, put on music of your choice and “walk the runway” in a costume parade fashion show.

 For grandparents at a distance, draw the costumes while on video chat together. Using the images as inspiration, each person can go off in their own home to find materials to create a costume inspired by the other person’s drawing and then show off their costume in a big reveal on video chat!

### **What’s Inside?**

1. Try making hamantaschen with a range of fillings, from traditional to unique. For example, you can use peanut butter, pineapple, or white chocolate. Let your grandchild come up with some ideas for unique fillings.
  - Here are some [instructions](#) on how to bake hamantaschen.
2. Once they are baked and ready, lay out the hamantaschen. Close your eyes or use a blindfold, and try each hamantaschen variety. Ask your grandchild: *Which one is your favorite? Can you guess what each one is made of based on the taste alone?*

## Messages of Love *Mishloach Manot*

Create your own gift boxes filled with loving notes for friends or family members.

### Materials:

- Small cardboard box or plastic container
- Paper; crayons or markers
- Various craft supplies, including scissors and glue

### Instructions:

1. Think about a person for whom you'd like to create a gift box filled with love. Grandparents and grandchildren can make boxes for each other, or they can collaborate to make a gift box together for another family member. Older children can create their own as a surprise for the recipient, while younger children can work on one in collaboration with a grownup.
2. Decorate a box or plastic container to be the gift basket. You can use crayons, markers, stickers, or other craft supplies you may have in the house.
3. Cut several sheets of paper into smaller square pieces (four pieces per page). On each of the pieces of paper, write or draw something you love about the recipient of the box (for example: picture of Grandma reading to me; the words "You are kind" written on a piece of paper).
4. Draw or write your loving messages on several pieces of paper. Fold each one, and put it inside the gift box you created. You can also include photographs or other special objects that convey your feelings about the recipient.
5. Now, deliver your gift box to the recipient, and watch as they open up each message of love.



If you are at a distance, you can create gift boxes together while you are on FaceTime or Zoom and then share them through the screen with each other. You can also mail gift boxes to each other and open them together on-screen.

# 3 Behind the Mask

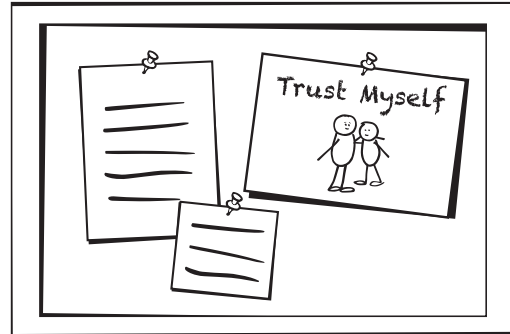
## Bravery to Be You

Explore the theme of having the courage to share yourself and your ideas, despite what others may think or say.

## Activities to explore and share our inner Queen Esther with the world:

### Be Bold, Be Brave, Be You:

1. Talk to your grandchild about the concept of bravery. Ask: *What do you think it means to be brave? What kind of bravery did Queen Esther show in the Purim story? How do you show bravery in your own life?*
2. Model the activity by sharing a moment when you showed bravery in your own life — the kind of bravery in which you said or did something that you believed in, even if you were nervous about what others might say or think or what the repercussions might be. For example, perhaps you asked your supervisor at work to speak to you (or a co-worker) politely and with respect.
3. Together, think of ways that your grandchild can model bravery at home, at school, or on the playground. For example, they can proudly share the ways they are different from others, stand up to a bully, or advocate for a friend who hasn't gotten a turn in a game.
4. With your grandchild, design a sign with a message about bravery, illustrating one of these ideas with pictures and words. Create the sign together and hang it up in your home where your family and friends can see it.



## Hamantaschen Haiku

A haiku is a short three-line poem in which the first and third line are five syllables and the middle line is seven syllables. Write your own haiku with a message about you.

### Materials:

- Hamantaschen Haiku Template (below)
- Pencils or pens

### Instructions:

1. Use the template below to write a haiku poem about yourself. On each of the three sections, write one line of the haiku: line 1 — five syllables; line 2 — seven syllables; line 3 — five syllables. For example: I like to dress up; I wish I had wings to fly; My eyes are dark green.
2. Decorate the inside “filling” of the hamantaschen with a picture that illustrates your poem.
3. Now, fold up each side toward the middle on the fold line, and your haikus will become hamantaschen. When you open each flap, you reveal the lines of the poem.
4. You can choose to work on one haiku together or each make your own poem to share with one another.

